

Summary of the PhD Dissertation

Polish-Soviet Friendship Society (1944–1990). Social Mass Organisation in People's Poland/Polish People's Republic

The thesis deals with the history and functions of the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society, which according to official though often incredible data was one of the most expanded mass organisations existing in the Polish People's Republic. PSFS, developed in the form of an association, on many levels (organisational, financial, personal) was closely reliant on the central and local PWP/PUWP committees and organs of public administration. It often played a role of an executor of the party's tasks concerning popularization and celebration of friendly relations with the USSR. Those activities were performed by a number of state and social institutions, which also took part in organising PSFS's ventures and were often used as a base for the development of its structures, therefore it is usually impossible to separate the achievements of the society itself from the results of the work of its cooperatives. In practice, the organisation activity was often poor or pretended, but in some cases it used unideological needs of common people, such as provincial demand for popular culture or just the will to take part in various forms of entertainment or competitions. After the thaw of 1955–1957, which was the main turning point in the society's existence, trips to the USSR became partially accessible and then gradually grew in number. PSFS functioned as one of the disposers of these still limited goods, thus the association gained some popularity.

Based on the scattered source materials, the thesis aims to describe many aspects of the organisation's history: evolution of its structures, changes or continuity of membership types and methods of extension and also, connected with these but depending mostly on the state subsidies, financial issues. The narrative concentrates in part on regional structures, so degrees of implementing or ignoring central directions could be analysed. There is a review of the areas where the association operated, mainly animation of simple anniversary celebrations and cultural or educational activities such as lectures. The thesis also pays attention to people participating in the work of the society on different levels and to their attitudes. Particular groups of activists taking part in PSFS's boards were portrayed, amongst them numerous officials performing their duties. The Conditions of engagement and work in the association

apparatus were shown. Also, common members as well as the level of reception of friendship propaganda were presented.

The dissertation has a chronological and topical structure. The first chapter describes the history of the organisation before 1956. It investigates the establishment of early PSFS's cells verifying the official version of the spontaneous beginnings. It deals with the methods of enlarging the structures in the period of the rapid growth and examines how internal organisation and activity vectors (e.g. an attempt to include a huge part of the population in the courses of the Russian language for adults) were changed during the phases of stalinization. Formed from the top, the society's actions were affected by a lot of disfunctions and lack of the participants' interest, therefore attempts to turn into a universal organisation ended in failure.

Chapter two refers to the following twenty-four years, limited by the next crisis of the political system. Although the beginning and the end of that period were the times of disruption, the former of which caused seasonal fall of PSFS's activities and long-term reduction of them outside main cities, generally it was the era of growing organisational routine, manifesting itself in the adaptation of enlargement ambitions to the possibilities resulting from the formula of collective membership, which was dominant in part of that time. Other symptoms of that process were stabilization of the society's staff and general growth of activity's recurrence. In the sixties, the addition of some annual ventures or competitions stated the rhythm of some local cells' doings. The others remained fake entities, which did not take any actions even on main festivities or anniversaries. Participation in friendship trains and other forms of organised eastbound tourism could attract only some of formal members.

Chapter three examines the society in the eighties. Some improvements were made as a reaction to a political crisis, which had financial effects due to the fact that membership fee payments had decreased and support of trade unions had vanished. The society's travel agency and publication publishing office were established so government subsidies could be partially reduced. The decline in that sponsoring as well as disappearance of the need for official Polish-Soviet friendship in the period of the system transition caused the end of the society's existence in a mass form.

21.07.2023, Filip Górnicki - Jussis